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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the use of classroom strategies to improve students' attitudes about language study while improving their practical use of the language. Secondary school students of Spanish completed an interest survey, and then were involved in language class activities including writing paragraphs, watching a recorded television show, reading Spanish-language literature, writing descriptively, participating in a scavenger hunt, and listening to a native speaker's presentation on Mexican culture. After 10 weeks, students completed another interest survey, and the results were compared to those of the first survey. It was found that the implementation of the activities was successful in improving student attitudes about language learning. Survey forms are appended. (MSE)

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CHANGING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO SEE PRACTICAL AND LONG-TERM APPLICATION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

by
FRANCES M. KUJDA

A Practicum Report

submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed Frances M Kipp

Abstract

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Descriptors: Secondary Education/Spanish/Foreign Language/Writing/Reading Comprehension/Listening/Second Language Instruction/Language Enrichment/Spanish Culture/Language Acquisition/Romance Languages/Second Language Learning/Student Motivation/Academic Achievement.

Many students are enrolled in a foreign language simply to earn credits to enter college. These same students did not see any practical value in the knowledge of a foreign language, therefore, the implementation strategies sought to change students' attitudes as well as present practical use of a foreign language. Students were involved in activities ranging from writing paragraphs, to reading Spanish-language literature and searching for items on a scavenger hunt. The results indicated that students enjoyed the application of Spanish in areas atypical of routine language studies. In comparing pre- and post-implementation responses on a teacher-constructed interest survey, more students responded positively to the long-term benefits of a foreign language than they had prior to implementation of special activities. The appendices include the student surveys as well as a survey to measure foreign language teachers' opinions.

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Practicum Title Changing Students' Attitudes to See Practical and Long-Term Application of a Foreign Language

Student's Name Frances M. Kujda

Program Site Orlando, FL Date 5/31/89

Observer's Name JESSE R LANE Jesse R Lane
(please print---------and sign)

Observer's position PRINCIPAL Phone #(407) 898-5491

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

Ms Kujda worked very hard to increase student interest of the Spanish language + culture. The results were very favorable and I feel she and the department will benefit from the hard work Ms Kujda put forth on this practicum.

Table of Contents

	Page
Title Page	i
Authorship Statement	ii
Abstract	iii
Observer's Verification	iv
Chapters	
1 Purpose	1
2 Research and Solution Strategy	11
3 Methodology	35
4 Results	46
5 Recommendations	52
Reference List	54
Appendices	
Appendix A: Student Interest Questionnaire	57
Appendix B: Teacher Survey	60
Appendix C: Student Interest Questionnaire ..... Post-Implementation	63

CHAPTER I

Purpose

The setting of this practicum is situated in a centrally located city in Florida. This area is considered to be the largest inland city with a population estimate of 154,413. The number of new residents moving into the city limits has increased by four percent since 1987. Because of its location, the area has become a transportation hub and serves as state, regional, and national headquarters for many companies. The semi-tropical climate has encouraged the establishment of many tourist attractions. The five largest employers are: Walt Disney World, Martin-Marietta, Naval Training Center and two public school systems.

Within this geographical area, the Fine Arts are beginning to enjoy widespread influence. Cultural entertainment includes a symphony

orchestra, an opera company, several dance troupes and theaters. Other cultural opportunities include an art center, museums, a planetarium, and art exhibits throughout the year. Area colleges and a state university also contribute to this cultural awareness.

As one of the largest employers, the local school system employs approximately 13,000 people. This number includes teachers, lunchroom workers, bus drivers, aides, administrators, and others. The public school system operates 68 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, 10 high schools, four special education centers, and four adult vocational schools.

The setting is a four year high school with a student enrollment of 1,975. The school term is comprised of two semesters (180 instructional days) in the traditional nine month school calendar. There are seven periods per day, each 50 minutes in length. The high school is accredited by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges and the Florida State Department of Education.

The neighborhood in which this school is located is an older, well-established community. Students come from middle to upper income families. However, the student population is changing; five percent of the student body qualifies for the free/reduced lunch program and of that amount, 90 percent are of Hispanic or Black ancestry.

As mentioned above, the school has a stable population but is changing due to new housing developments as well as changing school boundary lines. The latest population figures show a predominance of Whites (88 percent), followed by four percent Black, six percent Hispanic (of Spanish-speaking descent), two percent Asian, and .04 percent American Indian.

The school is widely supported by parents as well as teachers, which is evidenced by high membership of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Approximately 55 percent of parents and 98 percent of teachers are members of the PTA. The faculty consists of a teaching staff of 130. In addition to classroom instructors, there are

five media specialists, five guidance counselors, two occupational specialists, one dean of students, and an administrative staff of five.

The average class size is 32, however, the ratio of teachers to students rises to 1:35 due to the fact that counselors, occupational and media specialists are considered to be teaching units according to the teaching contract. The school is operating at capacity, yet less than 20 percent of students ride the school bus. The remaining 80 percent are walkers, bicycle riders, or ride with friends or parents.

In the senior exit survey, which is conducted by the guidance office, 490 seniors were polled as to their post-graduation plans. Eighty-five percent of these students planned to attend either a two or four year college or university. Special academic classes are offered for gifted students in English. Advanced placement classes are offered in European history, American history, calculus, and biology. A special program is also available for students with specific learning disabilities.

In the state of Florida, any student who wishes to attend a four-year Florida college or university must successfully complete two years of a foreign language. As can be seen above, a large majority of the students attend college following graduation. Of the total student enrollment, thirty percent are enrolled in a foreign language class. At this writer's work location, four languages are offered: French, German, Latin, and Spanish. Most students are enrolled in Spanish; perhaps because it is rumored to be "easier" or because of the Hispanic influence in the southern United States.

The writer is one of four Spanish teachers. The remaining four foreign language teachers complete one of the smaller departments. This writer exclusively teaches first year Spanish to predominantly ninth and tenth grade students. Some of these students may have had an introductory Spanish course at the middle school level.

Regular responsibilities of this writer include teaching five periods of Spanish I, one

period is utilized for planning, and one period is designated as a duty. The writer is also sponsor of the Spanish Club, which involves Spanish I and Spanish II students who meet approximately twice each month. Students plan activities that complement the culture they may learn in their Spanish class.

Throughout the school district, all who teach Spanish I must use the same textbook and follow a set curriculum; this is established by a committee of Spanish teachers county-wide. However, as at this author's worksite, each instructor is free to stress certain items within the curriculum if s/he deems it necessary. A discrepancy may occur if articulation is not clear between Spanish I and Spanish II expectations. To conclude, a teacher has freedom to implement changes as long as it does not disrupt the basic objectives of the curriculum.

Despite the large numbers of individuals who come from other cultures and languages, few Americans can say they are proficient in a language other than English. Spanish is used by

18 percent of American citizens ("Hispanic Business," 1988) while less than 3 percent of American high school graduates have mastered a second language (Hayden, 1984). In Florida, Hispanics (those of Spanish-speaking origin) make up 15 percent of the total population (Information Please Almanac, 1988).

The study of a foreign language is important for today's students who will become tomorrow's leaders. In the past, the geographic isolation of the United States has contributed to our ignorance of foreign cultures and languages. The consequences of becoming a monolingual nation will be felt by our young people unless they can see the importance and benefits of becoming multilingual. Unfortunately, many beginning foreign language students do not realize the possible long-term effects of this attitude. According to a survey conducted by this author, 85 percent of Spanish I students are taking a foreign language because it is a requirement to enter a post-secondary institution. However, 58 percent of the same students did feel that they would have

a reason to use Spanish in the future. The student interest questionnaire may be found in Appendix A.

At a recent open house at the practicum school site, parents also indicated that they did not see their children immediately applying their foreign language skills.

Since there is a high number of Spanish speakers in the United States, it would seem that students would learn Spanish because of their own desire rather than because they had to take the course to satisfy a requirement.

Ninety-three percent of teachers reported that they felt students had enrolled in a foreign language course "because they had to". According to the author's colleagues, 92 percent felt it advantageous to become proficient in a second language. The teacher survey may be found in Appendix B.

Currently, under existing conditions students are taking Spanish as a required course. To them, it is enough to complete homework assignments and tests successfully and receive an "A" on the

report card. Students, without knowing it are content to stay at the knowledge level of Bloom's taxonomy. If the United States hopes to avoid the undermining of our economic, political, and social well-being, tomorrow's leaders must be able to do more than recite a list of vocabulary or the conjugations of a verb. Our students will have to apply, synthesize, and evaluate information that they have learned.

Eighty-five percent of the foreign language students at the practicum site school have an ambivalent attitude toward their foreign language studies and do not see any practical value in that knowledge. A study conducted by Keller and Roel (1980) shows that less than 2 percent of the country's high school graduates are competent in a foreign language. Therefore, at least 58 percent of the students will need to change their attitude toward their foreign language studies in order to progress to an applications level that will allow them to be fluent.

At the conclusion of a 10 week implementation period: 85 percent of the Spanish I students at the practicum site school will

1) demonstrate a positive attitude toward their foreign language studies by responding on a teacher-made survey that they recognize long-term benefits in using Spanish. This objective will be measured by responses on a pre- and post teacher designed questionnaire.

2) apply Spanish by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This objective will be measured by responses on a teacher-made questionnaire and through a teacher-made student performance log.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Typically in foreign language classrooms, teachers use less group-work than teachers of other subjects and lessons are more teacher-dominated (Creton and Wubbels, 1984). The subject matter (e.g. grammatical explanations) thus becomes the means of communication; teachers and students need oral activities which convince them that the language is used for communication, not merely an end in itself. It was this reasoning which lead Pattison (1987) to research implementation of a communicative approach in selected European schools. Through the communicative approach, there is a reduction of teacher-directed activity which results in higher

communication levels of the students in the target language. Lessons, completed in the communicative classroom include more cooperation and exchange of ideas between students as well as greater opportunities and readiness to speak the foreign language.

To begin, Pattison found that positive motivation and attitudes of both teachers and learners are essential: Naiman (1978) goes a step further and states that attitude and motivation are often the best predictors of success in foreign language learning. While observing the communicative approach at various stages of implementation, Pattison summarized that for this new approach to be fully successful, the activities must go through three stages: 1) demonstration and trial in the whole class, 2) practice in class, groups or pairs with guidance from the teacher or the book, and 3) intensive independent practice.

Additionally, Pattison noted that for many teachers and students who are new to the communicative approach, a gradual reduction of

teacher control and guidance is helpful. Thus, until students can achieve independent communication in groups they will not experience improved speech in the foreign language. In the groups, students experience something which cannot be experienced through book exercises with the whole class -- a form of personal involvement and a clear aim or goal.

There are advantages to the communicative approach: 1) additional cooperation between teachers is required, 2) teachers' time is productively spent using suitable materials in class rather than making them, 3) students at various levels of achievement can reach their individual goals, and 4) students can be made to feel that communicative oral work is useful and relevant resulting in more time on task behavior. One aspect of the communicative approach which is usually not found in today's classroom is cooperation, not competition, with fellow students. This occurs because students work together towards a specific aim.

Lorrain Strasheim of Indiana University (1987) feels that through her research a method called strategic planning will motivate students. However, before strategic planning can be implemented, several items must be discussed.

There must be an integration of language and culture if students are to use the target language actively and spontaneously (Strasheim, 1987). Integration will naturally occur when teachers and curriculum design committees can define the purpose for which our students are learning a foreign language. A way of defining the purpose is to devise a system of "performances" or "goals". These performances measure what students can comprehend aurally, say, read, or write in a cultural context. "Performances" arise out of the situations, not the speech functions. The cultural background gives students vicarious experiences rather than language exercises which are merely translated. It is important that the curriculum which uses the performance system define an active, spontaneous use of the language and productive cultural interactions.

By defining the purposes of language fluency, teachers will also be establishing what level of proficiency is to be attained at each successive level of a foreign language course. This approach, because of its expansion of performances at each level, will help students mark their progress which will in turn motivate them because they have accomplished a performance. In this type of goal setting it is critical that the goal be stated clearly and that it be met. According to Schaefer (as quoted by Strasheim, 1987) the goal must be meaningful and ensure that the student can use the language to the extent that it provides some degree of self-satisfaction.

The strategic planning which Strasheim endorses includes the performance and goal based curriculum. However, in addition to this the curriculum must be constantly monitored, interpreted, altered, and improved. The strategic plan is dynamic as well. Classroom teachers must experiment in an ongoing effort to find methods that are compatible with the teacher's personality and the students' learning styles. By balancing

learning and skill-using, there will be positive effects on student motivation as well as retention of knowledge.

According to research done by Kitao (1987), it was found that there is a positive correlation between culture and reading comprehension. The schema theory that Kitao advocates is defined as follows: ". . . schemata are highly organized, generic knowledge structures composed of "slots" or "placeholders" for each component. . . The schema includes information about constraints on what normally can fill a particular slot and what the relationships are among the slots (Anderson, 1978). If no information is available to fill a slot, the reader/listener fills the slot with a value that s/he knows to be typical in that slot. A specialized type of schema is "event schemata" which are about common situations such as eating in a restaurant, shopping in a store, or visiting a doctor's office. Event schemata name the expected time ordering of events.

Further study on schemata in reading was completed by Steffenson, Joag-Dev, and Anderson in

1979. In their research, American and Indian (natives of India) participants were given descriptions of weddings from their own culture and from the other culture. After reading the selections, the participants wrote descriptions of the weddings. Members of both groups read the description from the other culture more slowly than the one from their own culture. They recalled more accurate details of the wedding in their culture and were able to draw accurate conclusions from the description of the wedding in their own culture. On the other hand, the participants often drew erroneous conclusions from the other culture's wedding, which was based on the schema for weddings from their own culture. Apparently when readers/listeners do not have an appropriate schema, input is interpreted according to the most similar schema that the reader/listener has. Kitao, in commenting on this study, concluded that the reader's knowledge of the schematic background of text increases comprehension. The lack of an appropriate schema for text hampers accurate comprehension.

There are implications of the schemata theory towards second-language readers. In 1981, Johnson investigated the effects of cultural background on comprehension by using American and Iranian subjects in a study similar to that of Steffenson. She found that for second-language readers, cultural background had a positive effect on aptitude to understand the text.

A key in motivating students is to make instruction appealing without becoming pure entertainment (Keller, 1983). This is the basic premise behind motivational design which is an aspect of instructional design that refers to strategies and principles for making instruction appealing. Motivational design strives to make instruction more intrinsically interesting. According to Keller, the desire to learn in an instructional environment may come from long range goals, institutional requirements or other sources. The primary concern of motivational design is improvement of the appeal of instruction for students.

An interaction-centered model researched by Keller assumes that human values and innate abilities influence and are influenced by environmental factors. This social learning theory, as it is also known, is most widely used in an educational context. These environmental influences can include social factors such as teaching style and the manner of using praise. Within this theory, two variables are included: achievement motivation (representing value) and personal causation (representing expectancy). The social learning theory is concerned with changing individual behavior to help students feel more confident and more in control of their destinies.

Keller has developed another motivational design model that is based upon expectancy-value theory. It has four categories of motivational variables: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. This model which consists of the four above variables of attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS) is a problem-solving model and helps a designer

identify and solve motivational problems related to the appeal of instruction.

There are many problems developing motivational designs, because unlike ability, motivation is dynamic and unpredictable. So many times feelings of motivation range from high states of arousal to preferences for certain types of activities. Furthermore, the intensity of these factors can vary tremendously over short periods of time.

Proficiency is used as a goal to be achieved in foreign language study. Administrators and the community must understand what levels of proficiency can be realistically attained: proficiency refers to a multi-level range of expertise. A scale used to measure proficiency is skill-based while an achievement test measures the students' knowledge of a fixed set of information (Snyder, Long, Kealey, & Marckel, 1987).

Heileman and Kaplan (1985) elaborate on this point: simply because a student knows adjectives does not mean that s/he can apply this knowledge. Furthermore, the demonstration of proficiency in a

foreign language requires the use of the language, ideally in a global setting rather than a structured setting. For language learners to improve their proficiency in a classroom environment, realistic opportunities to use the skill and the use of selective approaches and techniques must be provided.

Typically, proficiency-oriented activities focus on communication; mechanical, meaningful, communicative, and interactive. Communicative activities are more advantageous because of the students' personal involvement whereas interactive activities give students realistic experiences in the use of the language (Snyder, 1987). Listening to conversations by native speakers is an activity that challenges and motivates students. It challenges them to use vocabulary and grammar they have learned and it motivates them because the conversations represent realistic encounters in the target culture. Reading is considered to be the most pleasurable and least threatening of the basic language skills (Snyder, 1987) because of its solitary nature. Second language reading is a

very complex process, and acquiring a high level of proficiency is difficult. Even learners who are fluent readers in their native language have problems transferring the skill to the second language (Yorio, 1971). Through his research Yorio has found several important differences between reading in the native language and reading in the second language--most importantly that beginning non-native readers have short memory spans and often forget what they have just translated. Furthermore, Yorio believes that for learning to take place, the task must be meaningful to the students; they must be able to relate the material to what is already known.

The third skill which is necessary to improve foreign language proficiency is that of speech. At the beginning level when much of what is learned is vocabulary and set phrases, speech activities are limited. However, many old standbys can slowly be integrated into the class:

1. **Show and tell.** Students describe an object.

2. **Repeat, recall, retell.** Students recall a movie, book, or article that they have seen or read and retell it to the class.
3. **Guessing games.** Students try to guess another student's secret: an object, favorite food, or favorite color.
4. **Mini-interviews.** Students question another student on a limited topic such as his/her family, car, house, etc.
5. **Brainstorming.** Students produce a long list of excuses, summer activities, or beautiful sights.
6. **Role playing.** Students role-play common situations.

Writing proficiency in the second language can be problematic because many times students have difficulty in applying grammar skills and because teachers tend to grade the quality of language used rather than the actual message (Larson & Jones, 1984). An improvement is for teachers to respond to the student's message. Characteristics of good writing include the following: 1) a clearly formulated message, 2) sensitivity to style, and 3) precise use of the

language. The authors list five areas in which non-native writers should be proficient; correspondence, providing essential information, completing forms, taking notes, and formal papers. Yet, through research Larson and Jones believe that writing deserves to be in fourth place at the novice level and if writing is begun at this level, it should be in an informal style.

In conclusion, activities that build foreign language proficiency include four skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Additionally, these skills share some common characteristics:

1. Activities will use relevant vocabulary.
2. The language and situations will be meaningful to the students.
3. The skills practiced will be those needed in the real world.
4. The activities will practice the skill being learned.
5. The activities will motivate students to learn the language--they will be short, fun or interesting, and have observable outcomes (Snyder et al.).

Writing is making a comeback as a mode of learning. Emig, as cited by Terrio (1986), argues that writing meets many basic requirements for successful learning. In order to cultivate cognition, writing must be connective and selective (Emig, 1986). Both of these attributes enhance writing as a vital skill because it involves the linking of separate elements and requires the use of higher cognitive functions such as analysis and synthesis to establish connections.

According to Terrio, writing can be an important medium for the integration of all learning that occurs in a foreign language. Traditionally, writing has not occupied a priority position at the lower levels of the foreign language curriculum. Writing in the foreign language class can cause problems due to a number of factors: large class sizes, heavy teaching loads, and burdens of evaluation of writing assignments. Therefore, many students learn how to write only through structured workbook

exercises or through the memorization of grammar and verb conjugations for tests.

Writing, defined by Osterholm (cited by Terrio, 1986), is that language activity which involves the production of written discourse complete in meaning, whether it is a sentence, paragraph, or essay. To acquire cognitive benefits of language instruction, students have to integrate their bits of learning into a meaningful whole through writing. By completing structured exercises on grammatical principles, it cannot be assumed that students are learning how to write.

Moffett, who is a relational theorist, feels that writing should follow a hierarchy of skills: moving from the "self" to the "other" (Terrio, 1986). His theory entails a sequencing of writing assignments that begin with personal experiences and move toward impersonal topics. By following a hierarchy of language skills, students will progress toward higher cognitive development and writing proficiency. Terrio agrees with Moffett that when encouraging writing in a foreign language, some principles should guide a teacher's

choice in creating appropriate writing for students: 1) writing is a communication tool, 2) writing assignments should be designed according to the students' level, and, 3) writing should be integrated with other language activities such as reading, listening, and speaking.

Additional advice from the author includes giving students the opportunity to rewrite. Rewrites are a critical part of the writing process; the first rewrite focuses on grammar while subsequent rewrites focus on the content, style, and organization.

Encouraging students to write more confidently depends upon intelligent and supportive teacher commentary (Brannon, as cited by Terrio, 1986). The comments must provide constructive feedback and thus have the probability of dramatically improving the quality of student writing.

Motivation deals with why human behavior occurs (Wlodkowski, 1984). For educators the word motivation describes those processes that arouse behavior, give direction and purpose, and lead to

the choosing or preference of a particular behavior. If students are behaving, they are usually motivated--they may not be motivated to learn, but they are motivated. Student motivation is a dynamic continuous process and is affected by many factors such as ability, psychological well-being, past record of academic success, self-confidence, and self-esteem. The behaviorist point of view emphasizes extrinsic motivation which is motivation through the use of rewards which induce the student to learn (The Practitioner, 1987). However, the main difficulty is that learning may be seen as only a means to an end; that is, acquisition of the reward may become more important than the learning (The Practitioner). According to this same publication, motivation should be intrinsic. This means that students should want to study a subject for its own sake or for a sense of accomplishment.

According to Wlodkowski (1984), myths surround motivation. The first myth is that teachers motivate students. Teachers do not motivate students; teachers can make activities

attractive and stimulating, provide opportunities and incentives, but, it is the individual who is responsible for his/her motivation. Another myth is that learning improves with increased student motivation. Effects of student motivation depend on numerous factors such as the type of learning, the type of task, the cognitive style of the learner, and the type of setting.

In order to foster an attitude of positive motivation towards learning subject matter, several factors ought to be considered:

1. **Planning.** Motivation strategies must be planned.
2. **Relevance.** This is a common theme throughout research. Find a way of making the topic more interesting and relate it to events that are of interest to students.
3. **Variety.** Use more than one sense in teaching to facilitate motivation and the learning process. By using a combination of visual, auditory, and motor stimulation, it may be possible to reach

varying cognitive styles of learners. Create learning situations where students are active participants through games, role playing, and investigative methods.

4. **Goal setting.** Clearly establish a set of expectations so that students will benefit from structure (Wlodkowski, 1984). The goals should be attainable as should the means to achieve them.
5. **Interaction.** Shift interaction between the teacher and students during class presentations. Create dialogue with the students: ask their opinion, ask for feedback, engage their help and acknowledge their feelings (Wlodkowski).
6. **Climate.** A feeling that encourages motivation should be established (The Practitioner, 1987). Make the surrounding conditions pleasant and positive (Hawley, 1982). Be sure there is adequate light, comfortable desks, and an even temperature.

Through the review of literature, another theme of Wlodkowski is that of providing a stimulus to the students through questioning. The quality and timing of a questions is what determines its stimulus value.

Wlodkowski refers to Bloom's taxonomy in order to classify questions. His advice is to limit use of knowledge questions and increase the use of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation questions. Bloom's taxonomy has six levels:

1. Knowledge--depends on rote memory.
2. Comprehension--interpretation of subject matter.
3. Application--use of subject matter to solve problems.
4. Analysis--identification of causes and motives.
5. Synthesis--use of divergent thinking to solve problems.
6. Evaluation--judgement of information (Bloom, 1956).

Solution

Through extensive research, the writer has found that a combination of approaches might best achieve the outcome objectives as stated in Chapter III and resolve the problem of the students' ambivalent attitude. While all research is valid, only a fraction of it may be used in accomplishing a demonstration of a positive attitude in the students and the application of Spanish by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A brief overview of the research finds that while the means are different, the end results are not dissimilar. The researchers would like to see foreign language learners become motivated, proficient, and have a feeling of accomplishment.

The writer feels that one aspect of Strasheim's research is applicable to this practicum; strategic planning and goal setting. By strategically planning the event, it is possible to change the program according to the students' progress and needs. One method to determine if the students are progressing is to

devise a system of goals to be attained: if the the goal is reached, it is time for revision. An advantage of goal setting is that of accomplishment, which may motivate the students.

Furthermore, the active use of listening, speaking, reading, and writing will enhance students' proficiency in Spanish. Through listening to conversations by native speakers it is possible to challenge and motivate students. Speaking is a skill which must be integrated into foreign language learning early. Despite the fact that many set phrases are learned first, it is possible to encourage the students to speak in the target language through the use of "mini-interviews" and "guessing games". The writer agrees with Snyder's conclusion in which he states that reading, because of its solitary nature, is the least threatening language skill. The student can progress at his/her own rate and not be concerned with the speed at which other students are reading. Writing is a unique skill because it requires the student to use higher cognitive skills such as analysis and synthesis.

At times, it may seem difficult to get beyond the knowledge level of Bloom's taxonomy and apply that knowledge in practical ways. In choosing appropriate assignments for students, this writer will consider that the topics will be relevant to the students' interests and to the content matter to be learned. The assignments will be geared to their level of comprehension as to avoid frustration and discouragement. In order to further the students' application of Spanish, the writer plans to integrate some cultural aspects of Mexico. According to Strasheim (1987) there must be an integration between language and culture.

Through these methods of actively involving the students in learning, the writer hopes to intrinsically motivate them as well.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Through a 10 week period, students were involved in various activities which used and expanded their knowledge of Spanish. Some activities took place during one class period each week while others have become on-going since their inception. The activities were created so that the students would reach certain goals: a positive attitude toward foreign language studies, the desire to become fluent in a foreign language, and the application of communication skills in Spanish.

Week One

Cassette tapes which have been purchased from the textbook publisher were utilized during several class periods. The tapes consist of Spanish conversation, grammar explanations, and

Spanish conversation, grammar explanations, and pronunciation practice. Initially, the tapes were used for repetition of vocabulary, however, their use expanded to games. The games required that the students actively listen for a particular grammar structure and indicate that structure on their paper. Use of the tapes has become a weekly event.

Week Two

In first year Spanish, students have acquired a basic, working vocabulary, and only used it in translation exercises. Based on a review of literature this writer asked the students to write a paragraph. This paragraph was to be about any topic of their choice. For example, some students chose to write about spring break, their dog or cat, or a best friend. By using a topic relevant to students this activity was beneficial for all involved. The students enjoyed this new freedom with a foreign language while this writer was able to determine whether the grammatical structure had been mastered.

Week Three

In this writer's city, a cable television station broadcasts Spanish programs. One program, entitle "Tu Musica" (Your Music) is televised once a week. "Tu Musica" consists of 30 minutes of music videos, in which the majority of songs are performed (in Spanish) by Hispanic singers. The writer was able to record the show and time was set aside in order to preview the show. While previewing the show, the writer noted the lyrics of songs, the dialogue between songs, and the commericials. These notes were especially helpful to refer to when watching the video with the students. This activity was requested several times by the pupils, however, viewing time had to be limited because some students grew frustrated in their efforts to understand everything that was being said on the program.

Week Four

In an effort to make the students feel more comfortable writing in Spanish this week's

activity was to write another paragraph. Students were allowed to write a four sentence paragraph about any topic they wished as long as they limited themselves to familiar vocabulary. The author demonstrated this activity for the students so they would have an example to follow. This writing took approximately 30 minutes from one class period for all students to finish. The author checked the papers for students after writing since they would be presented orally by the students. Many students were concerned about speaking in front of the class, and since this was the first time to speak Spanish individually in front of the class, students were allowed to stand at their desk and recite their paragraph.

Week Five

This week's activity proved to be enjoyable for the author and the students. The author made arrangements to acquire a class set of La Prensa and La Semana: Spanish-language newspapers published locally. As the newspapers were passed out, students commented that they would never be

able to read the newspaper. Students were given five to ten minutes to peruse the newspaper on their own. The author asked questions in Spanish and English to direct students' attention to headlines, cognates, familiar advertisements and vocabulary. This activity occupied one class period and was continued during another class meeting the following week because of student request. The majority of students enjoyed the activity and gained more confidence in their ability to understand Spanish.

Week Six

In this week's activity, listening, speaking, and writing skills were used. Students were introduced to writing a paragraph about a person they like or admire, preferably a famous person who was known to all the students. In the paragraph, the person's identity was kept secret. Each paragraph followed the same order to help students' comprehension: the first sentence stated whether the person was alive or dead, the second sentence gave a physical description, and

the third sentence stated the profession of the person. Anything else the student wished to add became the fourth sentence. This part occupied 30 minutes from a class period. The author collected the paragraphs, made few corrections and returned them to students. During the next two class meetings, one half of the class period was spent listening to the students' paragraphs. Many students chose to write about sports figures, actors, musicians, and their Spanish teacher. It was necessary to make a rule which stated no one could begin to guess the person's identity until the student had completed the description.

Week Seven

A pre-activity strategy was necessary for this week's activity. The author reviewed with the students the uses of SER and ESTAR (two Spanish verbs which both mean "to be"), adjectives (colors), and clothing vocabulary. Afterwards, the author instructed students to pair up (in special cases, it was necessary to have one group

of three students) and discuss in Spanish the things they had to do or that they were going to do. This allowed them a review of grammar which was necessary in preparation for an upcoming test. The students were given 10 to 15 minutes for this review when the author instructed partners to find different seats, away from each other. At this point, each student attempted to write a description of his/her partner without looking at them. The first class finished this activity as the dismissal bell rang. The second class with which the author conducted the activity finished early, so an additional step was added. After collecting the descriptions, the author read the paragraphs to the class to determine if students could identify their friends based on the description. The students seemed to enjoy this and it provided closure for the lesson as well.

Week Eight

One way for students to remember vocabulary is for an instructor to introduce it by connecting

the words with personal experience. The writer accomplished this by conducting a scavenger hunt. Prior to the actual hunt, several tasks had to be completed: permission from school administration had to received for students to be out of the classroom, the instructions and list had to be compiled, and brown bags and Spanish/English dictionaries had to be acquired for students' use. The writer split the class into groups of four. Each group received one set of instructions which included directions for leaving the classroom and the list of objects to be found. The instructions and list were written in Spanish. Each group was allowed to use one Spanish/English dictionary. On the list of items to be found were grass, rocks, flowers, dirt, candy wrappers, etc. These objects were found outside the school buildings so students would not disturb classes that were in session. Most students finished the entire search within 30 minutes, which included the translation of instructions to completion of the actual search. This activity was well received since it

was the end of the school year (May) and everyone was ready to try something new.

Week Nine

Originally, this week's activity was to be a cultural activity, involving the translation and discussion of Spanish prose. However, the writer found it very difficult to find Spanish prose that first year Spanish students could understand with little help. Rather, the writer found a textbook with a synopsis of Lazarillo de Tormes, a classical Spanish novel. This account was rewritten in a more simplified form by the author, photocopied, and given to groups of students. This writer had recently attended a workshop on cooperative learning and this type of teaching was implemented.

The students were heterogeneously grouped by the teacher from low achievers to high achievers. All groups were given two copies of Lazarillo de Tormes. Their job was to translate the introduction and be able to recite the sentences.

Group size was limited to three and four persons. Each was assigned a "duty"; the recorder noted the translation, the "look-up" person searched for unfamiliar words in a Spanish/English dictionary, and the other person(s) became the checker(s) by assuring that group members knew how to pronounce the Spanish words, translate the sentences and had signed the written translation. Students seemed to enjoy this activity, and wanted to know when the class would work on the book's translation again.

Week Ten

An acquaintance of the author has received his doctoral degree in Anthropology from the University of the Americas in Cholula, Mexico. The author arranged for the speaker to visit her classes to reinforce the students' cultural awareness of Mexico's lifestyles. The speaker brought slides of a typical Mexican village and described how the people lived, their clothing, and their manner of making a living. He also

discussed traditional Mexican wedding ceremonies, the "quinceanera", and other Mexican customs associated with the Catholic church. By having slides and a speaker present in class, students seemed to realize the cultural diversity involved in Hispanic society. After the speaker left, students commented that they had enjoyed listening to the speaker and his anecdotes about humorous situations in Mexico.

CHAPTER IV

Results

After 10 weeks of implementation of special activities, students completed an interest survey. This instrument and its results were compared against the students' opinions from the pre-implementation survey. The pre-implementation survey may be found in Appendix A, while the post-implementation survey is in Appendix C.

The first objective to be measured was the demonstration of a positive attitude toward foreign language studies. Also, this objective included recognition, on the part of students, that foreign language proficiency has long-term benefits. By referring to Table 1, it can be seen that students have met the goal set by the author.

Table 1

Do you think you might use Spanish in the future?

Question Responses	Implementation Responses Pre	Post
Yes	58%	81%
No	33%	20%

Interpretation of these responses indicates that students realized there is a real need for foreign language proficiency in our multi-cultural society. Prior to implementation, the author set a goal that 85 percent of students would demonstrate a positive attitude toward foreign language studies. While only 81 percent responded positively, the margin between the two figures is so small that it could be considered insignificant; therefore, the first goal has been achieved.

Further evidence of success of the implementation strategies may be found in another

student response as seen in Table 2. This question sought to discover why the students had chosen to take a foreign language. The decrease of responses for the first reason, college entrance requirement, demonstrates that these students, through implementation activities reassessed their reasons for enrolling in a foreign language. More of them decided they enrolled in a foreign language because they wanted to learn the language and the culture.

Table 2

Why are you taking a foreign language?

Question Responses	Implementation Responses Pre	Post
college entrance requirement	85%	69%
extra electives	.5%	.3%
desire to learn a language and culture	.4%	41%

An interesting addition in this research was followed up by the author. Since more students recognized the benefits of a foreign language, it should logically follow that more students attempted to use Spanish. As can be seen in Table 3, attempts at using Spanish increased. On the survey, students were given four choices as to how they used Spanish; watching Spanish television, listening to Spanish radio, speaking with family or friends: also included was a fifth choice if they had not attempted any use of Spanish. If a student had attempted one activity with Spanish, it was tabulated as a positive response.

Table 3

Have you tried to use the Spanish that you learned?

Question Responses	Implementation Responses Pre	Post
Yes	35%	91%
No	58%	.7%

Possible negative intervening variables can be attributed to time constraints, large class sizes, and commitment to county curriculum guidelines. Nevertheless, a positive variable was that the activities were divided between two separate class periods of Spanish I. This allowed the author to momentarily assess the activity's effectiveness and, if necessary, alter it to benefit the next class' personality.

In retrospect, this author believes that further successes would have been possible if the implementation period had been extended beyond 10 weeks. Through student comments recorded in an anecdotal journal, many White students are intimidated by the Hispanic students' use of Spanish in their conversations, confused by the differences between Hispanic cultures, and unaware of modern lifestyles and customs of Spanish-speaking countries.

In conclusion, through the analysis of survey responses the author feels that the implementation activities served their purpose; achieving the objectives set in March. By analyzing the

intervening variables, it is possible that there are different approaches to achieving the goals. The first-year Spanish students now realize the necessity of becoming bilingual and understanding other cultures.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the implementation, the activities must become an on-going program. Ordinarily, teachers are satisfied that students receive passing grades, but expectations must go beyond the grade. Teachers must demonstrate to students the practical application and need for foreign language proficiency.

After analysis, some modifications should be made to enhance the favorable effects of the activities. Possible changes include expanding the timeline and more emphasis on culture. It is necessary that time be spent on the culture of Spanish-speaking countries and that of the Hispanic-Americans.

This writer has had a meeting with the members of her department to share the contents of this practicum. Some reactions were favorable and

others were complacent. The favorable comments addressed the adaptability and flexibility of the activities. Furthermore, in a meeting with the building level administrator this writer was encouraged to continue with the implementation of this practicum. The administrator suggested the incorporation of these activities earlier in the school year to strengthen the Spanish I curriculum.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STUDENT INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the questions honestly. You will NOT be "graded" on your answers. Do NOT write your name on this questionnaire. Circle the answer that closely describes your feelings.

1. Why are you taking a foreign language?

   a. It is a requirement to enter college or university.

   b. I had extra electives.

   c. I wanted to learn a language and its culture.

2. Why did you choose Spanish?

   a. I heard it was the easiest to learn.

   b. I have already had a Spanish class and thought this would be the the easiest to learn.

   c. I know a little (from friends and family) and thought that it might help me.

   d. It is becoming a common language and may be important to know.

3. Are you learning what you thought you would in this class?

   yes

   no

4. What do you hope to learn in this class?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you think you might use Spanish in the future (for a job, career or travel)?

   yes

   no

6. Do you use the Spanish you have learned?

at home	yes	no
greeting people	yes	no
listening to Spanish radio	yes	no
watching Spanish television	yes	no
I don't use it at all.	yes	no

7. Would you have chosen to take a foreign language if it had not been required for you?

yes

no

APPENDIX B

TEACHER SURVEY

1. Why do you feel your students enrolled in a foreign language?

   Because. . .

   a. it is a requirement to enter certain colleges.

   b. the student took it as an elective (for fun).

   c. the student wanted to find out how to speak the language and learn the culture.

2. Do you think it is advantageous to know a foreign language in the United States? Why?

   a. No.

   b. Maybe.

   c. Yes.

   Comment: _____

3. Do you believe that your students are truly interested in a foreign language and its culture?

   a. No.

   b. Yes.

   c. _____ % of your total class load.

4. Do you feel that by following the curriculum guide, the students learn what is most helpful to them?

   a. Yes.

   b. No. -

5. What do you think could be added to the curriculum guidelines to make a foreign language more meaningful for the students?

   _____

   _____

6. Do you believe that unstructured writing (NOT translation) in the target language is beneficial?

journals	yes	no
letters	yes	no
sentences	yes	no

Comment: _____

7. Is it beneficial for students to read their unnamed peers' writing?

a. Yes.

b. No.

Comment: _____

8. What language do you teach? _____

9. What level? Please indicate if it is Honors (or Advanced) level.

a. First year.

b. Second year.

c. Third year.

d. Fourth year.

e. Fifth year.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE
POST-IMPLEMENTATION

Please answer the questions honestly. You will NOT be graded on your answers. Do NOT write your name on this questionnaire. Circle all snwers that apply to you.

1. Why did you take a foreign language?

   a. It is a requirement to enter college or university.

   b. I had extra electives.

   c. I wanted to learn a language and its culture.

2. Why did you choose Spanish?

   a. I heard it was the easiest to learn.

   b. I have already had a Spanish class and thought this would be the easiest to learn for me.

   c. I know a little (from friends and family) and thought that it might help me.

   d. It is becoming a common second language and may be important to know.

3. A. What did you hope to learn in this class?

   _____

   _____

   B. Do you feel that you have learned it?

   yes no

4. Do you think you might use Spanish in the future (for a job, career or travel)?

   yes no

5. A. Have you tried to use the Spanish that you learned?

   yes no

   B. If yes, in what ways? (Check all that apply.)

   _____ watching Spanish television
   _____ listening to Spanish radio
   _____ speaking at home (short phrases)
   _____ greeting people
   _____ I never use it.
   _____ Other (_____)

7. Would you have taken a foreign language if it had not been required for you?

   yes no

END

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